

Shannon Hotel  
1 East Main Street  
Christiana  
New Castle County  
Delaware

HABS No. DE-190

HABS  
DEL,  
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PHOTOGRAPHS

MEASURED DRAWINGS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

SHANNON HOTEL

HABS No. DE-190

Location: 1 East Main Street, east corner of intersection of Delaware State Routes 7 and 273, Christiana, New Castle County, Delaware.

USGS Newark East Quadrangle, Universal Transverse Mercator  
Coordinates: 18.443410.4390600.

Present Owner: Mrs. John Burge

Present Use: Vacant

Significance: The Shannon Hotel, an integral part of the Christiana Historic District, is strategically situated at the village's main intersection, now formed by Delaware Routes 7 and 273. This important colonial crossroads linked Christiana with Philadelphia and the province of Maryland. This two-story, three-bay, brick dwelling, with a Flemish-bond facade, spanned by a pent eave, was apparently constructed by 1766. The structure, which was occupied by William Shannon, an innkeeper, in the late eighteenth century, was used as a tavern for many years.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: Mid eighteenth century. In 1766, a brick building is listed as being on the property in the will of Thomas Montgomery, a Philadelphia merchant.
2. Architect: Not known.
3. Original and subsequent owners: Reference is to the office of the Recorder of Deeds, New Castle County.

The ownership of this property is unclear for about half of the eighteenth century.

1728 Deed August 24, 1728 recorded in Book I, pages 8-9  
William Battel and Parnella his wife  
to  
James James, Jr.  
This 10 acres, 15 perches, contains the property on which  
the Shannon Hotel now stands.

1735 Deed May 21, 1735, recorded in Book K1, page 335  
James James, Jr. and Frances his wife  
to  
John Welsh  
Same property as above.

- 1739 Deed Septemmmber 1, 1739, recorded in Book 01, page 232  
John Welsh  
to  
Rebecca Janvier, Susannah John, Frances Alricks, his  
daughters  
This deed book is missing. This deed, and several others,  
are referenced in a deed July 1, 1778, recorded August 26,  
1778, Book D2, pages 10-11, in which Frances Alricks'  
daughter Jane Morrison sells part of this property to  
William McClay. Neither this deed, nor any others  
referenced there, appear to be concerned with the property  
on which the Shannon Hotel now stands.
- 1766 In his will dated March 1, 1766, Thomas Montgomery devised  
to his daughter, Elenor (sic) Montgomery, his house and  
lot in Christiana--apparently the Shannon Hotel property.  
This was referenced from Deed Book Q2, pages 259-262 for  
the year 1800.
- 1766- Eleanor Montgomery died underage and childless. The house  
1781 and lot in Christiana went to her sister Susannah Wilday,  
wife of John Wilday, and Robert Montgomery, the only child  
of her deceased brother Robert Montgomery, as tenants-in-  
common. This was referenced from Deed Book Q2, pages 259-  
262 for the year 1800.
- 1781 On May 12, 1781, the property was assessed by the order of  
the Court of Common Pleas. The assessment described a lot  
in Village of Christiana Bridge with a brick house, kitchen,  
frame stable and store. This was referenced from Deed Book  
Q2, pages 259-262 for the year 1800.
- 1798 On April 9, 1798, Robert Montgomery sold two  
adjoining lots to John Walker of Philadelphia for  
eight hundred pounds. This was referenced from Deed  
Book Q2, pages 259-262 for the year 1800.
- 1800 Deed March 26, 1800, recorded March 27, 1800, in Book Q2,  
pages 259-262  
John Walker and Sarah his wife  
to  
William Shannon  
2 lots. f 800. One of the lots is described as containing  
2 rods and 37 perches of lands with the improvements of a  
brick house, kitchen, frame stable, and store. The other  
lot is described as containing 272 feet of land.
- 1816 Deed April 12, 1816, recorded September 2, 1816, in Book P3,  
pages 613-616.  
Mary Shannon, widow of William  
to Isaac Price  
2 adjoining lots \$4,000.

- 1829 Deed June 27, 1829, recorded December 31, 1829, in Book K4,  
pages 9-11  
Isaac Price and Martha his wife  
to  
James Price  
Several lots in New Castle County, including two adjoining  
lots in Christiana. The total price for all the land was  
\$5,000.
- 1831 Deed December 19, 1831, recorded February 7, 1832  
James Price and Margaret his wife  
to  
John Allen  
It mentions all the lots in the previous deed for the  
price of \$2,500.
- 1868 Deed January 13, 1868, recorded January 14, 1868.  
Ann Allen and Rebecca Allen  
to  
John T. Simmons  
Lot in Christiana with a two-story, brick house and kitchen,  
frame shed, store, two stables and one shed for the price  
of \$3,100.
- 1872 Deed September 5, 1872, recorded October 22, 1872 in  
Book B10, pages 151-154.  
Catherine A. Simmons and others  
to  
John Mealy  
The property was sold at a public auction on March 31, 1872,  
at the hotel of John Elliot at 12 noon. It was the same  
land bought by John Simmons, except for a frame house which  
was sold on August 9, 1870. This is the frame house next to  
the Shannon Hotel.
- 1894 Deed February 10, 1894, recorded in Book I16, page 294  
John Mealy  
to  
Thomas W. Elliot  
The deed conveys a lot in Christiana with a brick tavern  
house and outbuildings for the price of \$3,500.
- 1921 Deed October 14, 1921, recorded in Book Y30, page 482  
Jennie Elliot  
to  
Charles H. Burge  
This deed conveys a lot in Christiana with a brick dwelling  
house described as being a former tavern and outbuildings.  
The price was \$1,500.

4. Additions and alterations: The brick wing, northwest of the original three-bay section, was added about 1817. A tavern petition for that year indicates that the innkeeper, Isaac Price, enlarged the "old established" inn. In the southeast is a nineteenth-century, shed-roofed addition with a stone foundation. A late-nineteenth or early-twentieth-century frame section abuts this addition at the rear. The brick lean-to spanning the rear was probably constructed in the nineteenth century.

B. Historical Events and Personages:

William Battel, who owned the land on which the Shannon Hotel was built, served a term as Sheriff of New Castle County (1725-26). William Battel and James James, Jr., a later owner of the property, served at least one term each as Justices of the Peace for New Castle County in the late 1720s.

The Hotel was named after one of its owners, William Shannon. According to Scharf's History of Delaware:

"Under his management the reputation of the hotel was very good, and persons travelling within twenty-five miles of it would go there to take a meal or spend the night with him. It was next conducted by Isaac Price. He was succeeded by David Armstrong, James Adams, William Simpson, and John Allen, by whom it was converted into a store in 1855. The hotel was reopened, and is now (1888) owned by John Mealy."

Prepared by: James Stewart  
Project Historian  
Delaware Division of Historical  
and Cultural Affairs  
1975

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: This is an example of an added-onto, double-pile plan with a pent eave, which was typical North Delaware feature of the eighteenth century.
2. Condition of fabric: Poor.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: The main house is 42'-11"x29'-9", two-and-a-half stories. There is a one-story, 42'-11"x16'-1" wing across the rear and a 14'x37', two-story lean-to wing on the southeast.
2. Foundation: Stone, partially plastered on exterior.

3. Walls: Flemish-bond brick painted white, with sloped top English bond water table on the front of the original structure only. Rear lean-to is common-bond red brick. The southeast lean-to is clapboard, partially painted white. On the original brick building across the main facade above the pent eave is a belt course two bricks in width.
4. Structural system, framing: Brick load-bearing walls. Wood rafters on original structure have pegged mortise and tenon connections at the ridge and collar beam. Each rafter is notched for a purlin. The northwest brick addition has wood rafters notched for collar beams. Southeast addition is wood frame. Rear brick addition has brick bearing walls. There are wood columns in the cellar and large brick chimney supports.
5. Porches: There are concrete steps at the three entrances on the southeast front and at the one on the northeast end. A shed roof across the northeast end was removed in 1981-82. On the southeast front is a plastered brick bulkhead, with wooden doors, providing access to the cellar.
6. Chimneys: There is a brick chimney on each end of the brick structure and one in the center. At the rear of the frame addition on the southeast is a brick chimney that has a two-joint, vitrified clay, sewer tile chimney pot. In the northeast brick addition is a plastered brick chimney with decorative clay chimney pot.
7. Openings
  - a. Doorways and doors: The main entrance on the southwest front near the center of the building has a stone sill and a four-light, hinged transom panel. The doors are paneled wood with glass lights.
  - b. Windows and shutters: The windows on the ground floor of the original brick portion have six-over-six-light single-hung sash; in the ground floor of the first brick addition, two-over-one-light sash. In the brick lean-to addition are six-over-six-light double-hung sashes. On the upper floor of the original house are six-over-nine-light single-hung sash and in the addition eight-over-twelve-light single-hung sash. In the frame addition, there are eight-over-eight and six-over-six-light single-hung sashes. Six-light casement sashes are in the attic.

Windows on the front have paneled wood shutters on the lower floor and louvered shutters on the upper floor. Windows in the cellar have brick segmental arch lintels and iron grates over the openings. The two windows in the living room of the original structure have been widened. There is a header course over the windows on the upper floor, front and rear, of the original building.

8. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: The main structure has a gable roof with asphalt shingles. The rear shed roof has built-up roofing. There is a roof hatch near the center of the building.
- b. Cornice, eaves: There is a boxed eave and cornice with metal gutter and downspouts. A pent eave, covered with asphalt shingles, is across the main facade of the original brick building.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:

- a. Basement: There is a cellar under the original building and the first brick addition. There is a bulkhead exterior entrance and an interior stairway from the entrance hall. Large, brick fireplace supports are at each chimney and a row of wood columns is in the center of the cellar. The cellar has a dirt floor and houses the oil tank and heating unit for the building.
  - b. First floor: The first floor of the original brick portion is essentially four rooms: the hall; the pantry, which is behind the hall and just as wide; the living room in the front of the house; and the dining room behind the living room. The northwest brick addition is one room, the northeast brick addition is two rooms, and the southeast frame addition is two rooms.
  - c. Second floor: The plan is similar to first floor except there is a bathroom at the end of the stair hall. The second floor of the frame lean-to is similar to the first floor, except there is no room over the small, rear room.
  - d. Attic: The attic is unfinished, but floored. It is divided into two rooms with chimneys passing through each end.
2. Stairways: The stairway is a close-string, straight-run stair with the top four treads winding to the second floor; the bottom four treads are at an angle. A bannister with molded handrail and turned balusters runs from the newel to the wall, with wood paneling encasing the string. The stairway to the attic is a closed-string, straight-run stair with the top three treads winding. The string is encased with vertical wood paneling and there is a bannister with molded handrail and turned balusters. There is a small, enclosed stairway in the frame lean-to that has wood treads and risers and no handrail.

3. Flooring: The flooring in the house is wide wood planks. Asphalt tile covering has been applied in the stair hall. The kitchen has a linoleum floor covering and the cafe rooms have asphalt tile and linoleum. The floor in the cellar is dirt.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: The plaster walls in the living room and dining room have been wallpapered and the ceilings are painted plaster. The walls in the cafe rooms have plywood paneling, painted. There is a linoleum tile wainscot in the kitchen. Some walls and ceilings in the frame addition have been wallpapered. A fiber tile is on the ceiling in the kitchen and cafe rooms.
5. Doorways and doors: Paneled wood doors have wood frames and surrounds. A double opening between the living room and dining room has a pair of glass doors. Doors in the frame addition are vertical plank.
6. Cabinetwork: The fireplace wall in the pantry is paneled wood. Some rooms have chair rails that have been painted. There are paneled cupboards above the corner fireplaces on the second floor and cupboards at the ends of the other second-floor fireplaces.
7. Hardware: Simple thumb-latch hardware exists on some interior doors.
8. Mechanical equipment: The corner fireplaces in the living room and dining room have wood mantels and surrounds and brick hearths. The fireplaces in the dining room and pantry are closed up. All rooms now have radiators with steam heat from a central furnace in the cellar. All light fixtures are electric.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The hotel faces southwest on the corner of State Routes 7 and 273. It faces the Christiana Fire Department and is a part of Christiana Historic District.
2. Outbuildings: There are two modern frame garages at the rear of the site. To the rear are three small frame outhouses.

Prepared by: John P. White  
Project Supervisor  
Historic American Buildings Survey  
July 1975



PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Primary and Unpublished Sources:

Deed Books: New Castle County Court House, Rodney Square,  
Wilmington, Delaware.

Tavern Petitions: Delaware Archives, Hall of Records, Dover, Delaware.

Wills: Delaware Archives, Hall of Records, Dover, Delaware.

Road Papers: Delaware Archives, Hall of Records, Dover, Delaware.

New Castle County Assessments: Delaware Archives, Hall of Records,  
Dover, Delaware.

B. Secondary Sources:

Baist, Wm. Atlas of New Castle County. Philadelphia: Wm. Baist, 1893.

Beers, D. G. Atlas of the State of Delaware. Philadelphia: Pomeroy  
& Beer, 1868.

Scharf, J. Thomas. History of Delaware, 1609-1888. 2 Vols.  
Philadelphia: L. G. Richards & Co., 1888.

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey in cooperation with the Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs, State of Delaware, and was financed with funds provided by the State of Delaware. Under the direction of John Poppeliers, Chief of HABS, the project was completed during the summer of 1975 at the Historic American Buildings Survey Field Office, Dover, Delaware, by John P. White (Assistant Professor, Texas Tech University), Project Supervisor; James Stewart (University of Delaware), Sally Schwartz (Harvard University), Project Historians; Charles B. Tonetti (Syracuse University), Architect; Student Assistant Architects, Scott Barnard (University of Pennsylvania), Frederick K. Read (University of Notre Dame), and Mark T. Wellen (Texas Tech University). The written data were edited by Alison K. Hoagland, Historian, in the HABS office in January 1983.